

Message Text

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44

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TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, SCUL, UR

SUBJ: DEPARTURE OF YEVGENIY ABEZGAUZ

REF: LENINGRAD 1867

1. WE WERE RECENTLY TOLD BY JEWISH DISSIDENT LEADER YEVGENIY ABEZGAUZ THAT HE PLANS TO LEAVE LENINGRAD FOR ISRAEL ON EITHER DECEMBER 20 OR 25. OVIR HAS TOLD HIM THAT HE MUST DEPART BY DECEMBER 15 OR RISK LOSING HIS EXIT PERMISSION, BUT ABEZGAUZ IS INSIUTING UPON THE LATER DEPARTURE DATE AND SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING THIS PARTING SHOT INMSEFIANCE OF THE LENINGRAD AUTHORITIES.

2. ABEZGAUZ DOES NOT SEEM OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT MAKING HIS WAY IN HIS NEW LIFE. HE SAID THAT HE DOES NOT CONSIDER HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE SOVIET UNION TO BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE BUT RATHER A CONTINUATION OF A MORAL DECISION ALREADY MADE LONG AGO. HE ALREADY HAS A SIZEABLE PORTION OF HIS PAINTINGS IN THE WEST ON DISPLAY AND HE SAYS THAT THEY ARE SELLING WELL FOR PRICES UP TO \$1,000 AND THAT HE EXPECTS THE PRICE TO INCREASE FURTHER AS THE GROUP ALEPH EXHIBITION CONTINUES ITS CURRENT TOUR THROUGHOUT THE U.S. AND IN 1978 MOVES TO WESTERN EUROPE.

3. AS WE HAVE INDICATED EARLIER, ABEZGAUZ' DEPARTURE WILL LEAVE A MAJOR GAP IN THE "ACTIVIST" ELEMENT OF LENINGRAD'S DISSIDENT COMMUNITY BUT MOST ESPECIALLY IN THAT ELEMENT PROMOTING SPECIFICALLY JEWISH CULTURAL THEMES.

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PAGE 02 LENING 01948 100948Z

ABEZGAUZ HAS TOLD US THAT HIS SUCCESSOR AS LEADER OF

THE JEWISH DISSIDENT ARTISTS IN LENINGRAD WILL BE ANATOLY BASIN, 40 YEAR OLD FORMER GRADUATE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL SECTION OF THE LENINGRAD ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION INSTITUTE. BASIN IS EXPECTED TO WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH 27 YEAR OLD LENINGRAD ARTIST ALEKSANDR OKUN, A GRADUATE OF LENINGRAD'S HIGHER INDUSTRIAL ART INSTITUTE. WHETHER BASIN WILL BE ABLE TO ASSUME ANYTHING LIKE THE CATALYTIC LEADERSHIP ROLE WHICH ABEZGAUZ HAS PLAYED WITHIN THE JEWISH ARTISTIC COMMUNITY IN RECENT YEARS REMAINS O BE SEEN. ABEZGAUZ SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT BASIN AND OKUN WILL INDEED FIND AJS TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF THE LENINGRAD JEWISH DISSIDENT ARTISTS MOVEMENT. BASIN, HOWEVER, WILL ASSUME THE MANTLE AT A DISTINCT DISADVANTAGE SINCE THE JEWISH ARTISTS MOVEMENT, WITH ABEZGAUZ' DEPARTURE, WILL NOT ONLY HAVE LOST A FIGURE OF EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP ABILITY, BUT THE FOURTH MEMBER OF THE GRAN ALEPH THIS YEAR, FOLLOWING THE EARLIER EMIGRATION OF YURI KALDENDAREV, TATYANA KORNFELD AND ALEK RAPAPORT. AND ABEZGAUZ, KALDENDAREV AND RAPAPORT WERE CONSIDERED AMONG THE MOST TALENTED ARTISTIC EXPONENTS OF THE JEWISH ETHOS IN LENINGRAD. NEUBERT

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